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**Report on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services**

# Review of the organizational framework of the public information function of the Secretariat

## Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

**"Public information activities were undertaken by 2,113 Secretariat-affiliated staff members"**

*Summary*

Public information is a cross-cutting function Secretariat-wide, involving all activities that raise public awareness of the ideals, activities, goals and accomplishments of the United Nations. The function, which was undertaken from the funding of the United Nations by the Department of Public Information, has expanded over time to include other programmes, offices, departments and missions in the course of promoting their respective mandates and related activities.

The present review of the organizational framework of the public information function of the Secretariat was mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/236. The Secretary-General ultimately requested the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to undertake the review. The objective of the review was to assess, as systematically and objectively as possible, the organizational framework of the public information function of the Secretariat, including the resources dedicated to that sphere of work. The review provides information for the Assembly and the Secretariat to consider with regard to achieving increased coordination and efficiencies in the allocation of resources as well as a descriptive analysis of the function, including main activities, coordination and dedicated resources. The review included all departments of the Secretariat and all duty stations, field missions and entities subject to OIOS oversight.

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The review was undertaken in accordance with the evaluation norms and standards established by the United Nations Evaluation Group. OIOS utilized a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods, and the results of the review were derived from documentary, testimonial, observational and analytical evidence. In addition to the Department of Public Information, 64 focal points were assigned Secretariat-wide to the work of obtaining primary data.

The review revealed that there are a total of 2,113 posts, that is, the equivalent of 4 per cent of the total staff of the Secretariat, dedicated to the public information function Secretariat-wide. The majority of these posts, 74 per cent or 1,571 posts, were located at offices away from Headquarters, for example at field missions. The level of posts varied, with 45 per cent of the total in the General Service category; 23 per cent in the Field Service, Local level, National Officer and United Nations Volunteers categories; almost 30 per cent in the Professional category; almost 2 per cent at the level of Director; and 1 post at the level of Under-Secretary-General for the Head of the Department of Public Information. Entities reported that an additional 130 posts in both the General Service and Professional categories are responsible for public information activities in addition to main job functions.

Public information posts are funded from different budgetary sources, with the majority of funding coming from the regular budget (48.3 per cent), and the rest from the peacekeeping budget (38.9 per cent); extrabudgetary resources (12.4 per cent) and the peacekeeping support account (0.4 per cent). In addition, non-post (financial) resources of approximately $50 million from all funding sources Secretariat-wide were utilized for public information activities for a variety of purposes such as television and video production, translation and website maintenance.

The capacity and dedicated size of public information offices differed throughout the Secretariat. Three types of arrangements exist for the public information function within entities other than the Department of Public Information itself: 45 have a dedicated office for the function; 8 have public information staff but no dedicated office; 11 have no dedicated office or public information staff and usually have other staff undertaking public information activities as part of other duties, with assistance from the Department of Public Information or related United Nations Information Services or United Nations information centres when closely located. Most substantive entities have dedicated offices for public information while non-substantive entities do not unless required for a specific project.

A broad range of public information activities are undertaken Secretariat-wide using many different tools and approaches. Most activities fall within the strategic communications, news and media and outreach categories.

The focus of all coordination efforts was on preventing the duplication of work, saving time and ensuring a common message. Coordination was carried out in three ways:

- Formally system-wide by the United Nations Communications Group, established in 2002 with 191 principal members from the Secretariat, the specialized agencies, programmes and funds;
- Informally Secretariat-wide between entities and the Department of Public Information, including the Department's regular support to Secretariat "client" departments; although the Department is the main entity dedicated to

public information it does not have a mandated role for coordinating that function within the Secretariat;

- Through other ad hoc informal networks.

The coordination provided by the United Nations Communications Group, and informally otherwise, was viewed as efficient by focal points that it prevented the duplication of work, saved time and ensured a common message. All focal points noted the importance of coordinated public information in ensuring a unified presentation of the work of the United Nations. Focal points noted that there were two main factors that challenged the coordination of the public information function in the Secretariat: (a) the lack of clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of the function; and (b) the absence of a strategic plan that maps out the direction and priorities.

The review highlighted the fact that the organizational framework of the public information function is larger than the original Department established for that role. Given the decentralized structure of public information activities Secretariat-wide, resources dedicated to the function and the challenges to coordination, it was clearly time to review the approach to the framework in order to determine an overall vision, the roles of the respective entities involved and the amount of coordination desired. The present report contains the recommendation of OIOS to the Department of Public Information in that regard.

# Contents


| | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| I. | Introduction | 5 |
| II. | Background | 5 |
| III. | Methodology | 8 |
| IV. | Results | 9 |
| | A. Secretariat-wide, 2,113 posts and nearly $50 million non-post resources were dedicated to public information activities | 9 |
| | B. The structure of the public information function varied Secretariat-wide, with most entities having a direct reporting relationship to senior management | 14 |
| | C. A broad range of public information activities were undertaken across the Secretariat | 15 |
| | D. The United Nations Communications Group provides formal system-wide coordination of public information while Secretariat-wide coordination is informal | 17 |
| | E. Coordination of public information activities was challenged owing to the wide scope of work undertaken by the United Nations, unclear public information roles and the lack of a strategic plan | 20 |
| V. | Conclusion | 21 |
| VI. | Recommendation | 22 |
| Annexes | | |
| I. | Total number of public information posts in the Secretariat and related entities by level | 23 |
| II. | Text of the comments received from the Department of Public Information, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts on the review | 27 |

# I. Introduction

1. From September 2010 to February 2011 pursuant to a mandate from the General Assembly in its resolution 62/236, and at the request of the Secretary-General, the Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) undertook a review of the organizational framework of the public information function of the Secretariat.

2. The objective of the review was to assess, as systematically and objectively as possible, the organizational framework of the public information function of the Secretariat, including the resources dedicated to it. The present report provides information for the General Assembly and Secretariat to consider with regard to achieving increased coordination and efficiencies in resource allocation in this area. It also provides a descriptive analysis of the structure of the public information function, its main activities and the coordination efforts and resources dedicated to it within the Secretariat for the biennium 2010-2011. The review included all Secretariat departments, as well as duty stations, field missions and entities subject to OIOS oversight.

3. Public information is a cross-cutting function. For the purpose of the present review, public information has been broadly defined in order to ensure the inclusion of all types of activities undertaken by the Secretariat, ranging from press releases to radio broadcasting. The definition, which was based on a synthesis of various statements of the General Assembly regarding its purpose, function and dissemination, encompasses any activity which raises public awareness of the ideals, issues, activities, aims and accomplishments of the United Nations and promotes an informed understanding of its work and purposes among the peoples of the world using both traditional and new media.[1]

4. The report incorporates comments received from focal points assigned Secretariat-wide as well as from the Department of Public Information during the drafting process. Final comments from the Department of Public Information, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts are appended, in full, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/263 (see annex II). OIOS expresses its appreciation for the cooperation extended by the Department of Public Information and the focal points assigned to work on the review.

# II. Background

## Role of public information at the United Nations

5. Since the establishment of the United Nations, public information has played a vital role in communicating to the peoples of the world the broad goals of the United Nations, including the maintenance of international peace and security, the development of friendly relations among nations and the promotion of social progress, better living standards and human rights. At a basic level, it involves disseminating information about activities being undertaken towards these overall

[1] See General Assembly resolutions, including 13 (I), and the most recent resolution on public information, 64/96, sects. A and B.

goals and supporting operational goals in terms of the specific mandates of field missions. It also includes promoting durable and sustainable goodwill and support for the work of the Organization. The only caveat placed on the role of the public information function has been the requirement to keep some information out of the public domain owing to concerns for security and diplomatic sensitivity. The Secretary-General's bulletin, entitled, "Information sensitivity, classification and handling", issued in 2007, acknowledges that the work of the United Nations should be open and transparent, except insofar as the nature of information concerned is deemed confidential in accordance with certain guidelines set out therein.[2]

## Department of Public Information

6. The first United Nations entity with responsibility for public information, the Department of Public Information, was established by the General Assembly in its resolution 13 (I) in 1946 as one of the eight principal units of the Secretariat. In creating the Department, the Assembly noted that "the United Nations cannot achieve its purposes unless the peoples of the world are fully informed of its aims and activities". The Department's work is guided by Assembly priorities and by its subsidiary body, the Committee on Information, through resolutions relating to questions on information. The Secretary-General reports annually in three separate reports on the Department's activities to that Committee.

7. The mission of the Department of Public Information is to assist in fulfilling the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating on its activities through the provision of accurate, impartial, comprehensive, balanced, timely and relevant information to the public, with the greatest transparency and public impact, in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization.

8. The Department of Public Information has three divisions: the Strategic Communications Division; the News and Media Division; and the Outreach Division. The Department is based at Headquarters in New York, but also works through a network of 63 bureaux worldwide, which are part of the Strategic Communications Division. These are comprised of: two United Nations Information Services at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna; 52 United Nations information centres in Africa, the Americas, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States; the United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels; and eight United Nations offices in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Eritrea, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The core functions of these bureaux are to promote public understanding and support for the United Nations by disseminating information and organizing activities and events in cooperation with local media, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and other local partners. They also provide feedback to Headquarters on national, regional and local media coverage of United Nations activities of relevance to the Organization.

9. For administrative purposes the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General is included within the budget of the Department of Public Information, including funding for staffing and travel to accompany the Secretary-General. This

[2] ST/SGB/2007/6.

arrangement means that the post and non-post resources of that Office are part of budget section 27. The Spokesperson's core functions include handling the Secretary-General's relations with the news media, explaining the policies and the work of the United Nations to the global media through daily briefings, interviews and background discussions and travelling with the Secretary-General. The Spokesperson reports directly and works closely with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and performs its functions in coordination with the Department.

## Other public information activities

10. While the Department of Public Information has the primary mandate for public information, other departments, offices and field missions also undertake public information activities to promote their respective mandates and related programming. Public information is carried out both by substantive entities, which undertake the work mandated under the three main pillars of the United Nations system, security, development and human rights, and non-substantive entities, which undertake internal administrative work.

11. These entities work independently from the Department of Public Information on public information activities and have in-house capacity either fully or partly dedicated to their respective public information functions. The Department does work with these entities, however, in providing ad hoc formal and informal guidance on various issues, including specific communications campaigns and priorities of the Secretary-General. At Headquarters, the Department works with substantive departments in a "client" relationship, with regular meetings at the senior and working levels to discuss public information and communications priorities. The priorities of the substantive department are incorporated into the annual communication priorities document and disseminated to the United Nations information centres, peacekeeping missions and resident coordinators. The Department works closely with entities in the United Nations system to deliver effective and targeted information programmes on key topics, including information on global conferences and observances.

## Formal system-wide coordination mechanism

12. The main consultative and coordinating mechanism for public information of the United Nations system is the United Nations Communications Group, which was formed in January 2002 to replace the Joint United Nations Information Committee. The Communications Group was formed as a flexible and substance-driven mechanism for inter-agency coordination in public information, providing a common communications forum system-wide. It has 191 principal members from the Secretariat, the specialized agencies and the United Nations programmes and funds. The Department of Public Information acts as the secretariat of the Communications Group and the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Public Information acts as its Chair.

13. The role of the United Nations Communications Group is to: provide general policy advice on public information matters of common interest; carry out jointly planned public information operations, including the establishment of cooperative arrangements for special projects and events; facilitate practical experience sharing;

and foster efficient information services, including the shared use of facilities and resources.

14. The main activities of the United Nations Communications Group include: the organization of weekly meetings at Headquarters to discuss issues of importance to the entities of the United Nations system; the establishment of task forces to develop and implement communications strategies for priority issues, campaigns or upcoming conferences and other events; and the holding of annual sessions for broad-ranging discussions and policy formulation on general and specific communications and public information issues. All of the activities organized by the Communications Group serve to promote a common sense of purpose within the information community of the United Nations system.

15. Since 2006, the United Nations Communications Group has operated 102 country-level groups at offices away from Headquarters, working with the communications focal points of all United Nations offices operating in those countries. In post-conflict countries and countries in crisis, this work also includes peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions and specific missions for humanitarian emergencies. The focus of such work at the country level is on strengthening inter-agency cooperation in public information and communications and increasing the media profile of United Nations activities at the national and regional levels. Country-level communications groups are chaired by the Director of the local United Nations information centre or, in the absence of an information centre, by the senior Information Officer of another United Nations agency, oftentimes the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) or a peacekeeping mission.

## III. Methodology

16. The review mandated by the General Assembly was undertaken in accordance with the evaluation norms and standards established by the United Nations Evaluation Group. The results of the review were derived from a combination of documentary, testimonial, observational and analytical evidence. In its work, OIOS utilized a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, obtaining data from the following seven sources:

(a) A review of relevant mandates, strategic frameworks, the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS) and related performance reports, parliamentary documentation, guidelines, policies, manuals, and relevant materials relating to the public information activities of the United Nations;

(b) A structured analysis of data received from all focal points assigned to the review pertaining to the public information function at their respective entities, including post and non-post resources fully and partially allocated to it; the structural placement of the function within the entities; activities undertaken; and guidance received or issued on the function;

(c) Semi-structured interviews with 141 assigned focal points,[3] key members of senior management of the Department of Public Information; substantive management staff; and public information staff in the field;

[3] Focal points assigned by the entities were generally public information professionals.

(d) A web-based self-administered survey distributed to the 65 review focal points;[4]

(e) Direct observation of the meetings of the United Nations Communications Group at Headquarters;

(f) Field missions to the United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission and the United Nations Information Centre in Dakar;[5]

(g) A review of public information functions and post resources at the World Bank, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNDP.

17. The resources analysed for the review were taken from: the regular budget for the biennium 2010-2011; the peacekeeping and support account budget for the period from 1 July to 30 June 2011; and the special political mission budgets for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2010.

18. The review had a limitation regarding data obtained on partially dedicated posts since such information was reported by the related entities themselves, with varying interpretations of who undertook partial activities and what constituted public information. This affected the comparability of the data. To address this limitation, OIOS triangulated data from multiple sources to support the results.

## IV. Results

19. Data on posts and non-post resources, other than that provided for the Department of Public Information and for peacekeeping missions, for public information Secretariat-wide was unavailable and/or unclearly marked in budget fascicles. For that reason, OIOS collected data on relevant post and non-post resources through a formal document request.

### A. Secretariat-wide, 2,113 posts and nearly $50 million in non-post resources were dedicated to public information activities

20. Public information activities were undertaken by 2,113 Secretariat-affiliated staff members, as shown in table 1 by location of posts. The number of posts comprised 4 per cent of the total number of staff Secretariat-wide.[6] Further

[4] The survey was sent to 60 focal points (five focal points were assigned at a later stage during the review); 43 responded, yielding a 71.6 per cent response rate.

[5] Sites were selected based on a mapping of the size, scope and function of offices and field missions undertaking public information activities as well as input from the Department of Public Information, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

[6] See A/65/350. The figures used for total number of staff, including the Secretariat and related entities (the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)) as of 30 June 2010 is 51,433.

information is contained in annex I, which presents a summary of all entities with overall number of posts and levels for each entity.

Table 1

**Total number of posts assigned to public information activities at the Secretariat and related entities by location**

| *Location* | *Number of posts* |
|---|---|
| Headquarters, New York | 542 |
| United Nations information centres and field offices[a] | 261 |
| United Nations offices[b] | 43 |
| Regional commissions | 38 |
| Offices away from Headquarters | 252 |
| International Tribunals | 47 |
| Peacekeeping missions | 823 |
| Special political missions | 99 |
| Other related entities | 17 |
| **Total**[c] | **2 113** |

*Source*: Compiled by OIOS based on data provided by entities.

[a] These posts are part of the budget of the Department of Public Information; the Department commented that this includes 72 non-public information staff.

[b] These posts are part of the budget of the Department of Public Information for the United Nations Information Services and for visitor services at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna and the United Nations Information Centre in Nairobi.

[c] To avoid double counting the total reflects the subtraction of 6 posts that belong to the Department of Public Information at the United Nations Information Centre at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and 3 posts at the United Nations Information Centre in Beirut.

21. The majority of all public information posts, 1,571 posts (74 per cent), were located away from Headquarters. The majority, 823 posts, were in peacekeeping missions, accounting for the largest number of public information posts in the Secretariat (38 per cent). The peacekeeping missions with the largest number of posts were:

(a) United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO): 237 posts;

(b) United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS): 167 posts;

(c) United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH): 104 posts;

(d) United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI): 121 posts.

22. Special political missions had 99 posts, a substantially smaller number compared to peacekeeping missions. The special political missions with the largest number of posts were those administered by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations:

(a) United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA): 44 posts;

(b) United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI): 18 posts.

23. Some special political missions had only one officer in charge of public information for the mission; these included UNOWA; the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL); and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL).

24. Other Secretariat offices based away from Headquarters accounted for 252 posts. The largest number of posts were at entities with wide networks of country offices and a greater reliance on extrabudgetary sources:

(a) Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): 112 posts;

(b) United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP): 55 posts;

(c) United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA): 29 posts;

(d) Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): 28 posts.

25. Twenty-five per cent, or 542 posts, were located at Headquarters, most within the Department of Public Information (484). The other main departments/offices with a significant number of public information posts were:

(a) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: 21 posts;

(b) Department of Management: 11 posts;

(c) Department of Peacekeeping Operations: 8 posts;

(d) Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Communications and Speechwriting Unit: 7 posts.

26. At Headquarters, five departments and offices (the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Political Affairs, OIOS, the Office of Legal Affairs and the Peacebuilding Support Office) did not have any fully dedicated public information posts, although they did have some posts that were partially dedicated to public information activities.

**Levels of public information posts varied, with the highest levels being located at Headquarters**

27. The level of public information posts varied between categories, with 45 per cent of all 2,113 posts in the General Service category. Almost 30 per cent of the total number of posts were in the Professional category (P-2 to P-5) and almost 2 per cent of the posts were at the level of Director (D-1 and D-2). For field missions, public information posts in the Field Service, Local level, National Officer and United Nations Volunteers categories accounted for 23 per cent of the total number of posts. Table 2 provides a detailed breakdown of the total number of public information posts by level.

Table 2
**Total number of public information posts at the Secretariat and related entities by level**

| *Category* | *No. of posts* | *Percentage of posts* |
|---|---|---|
| Director and above | 38 | 1.8 |
| Professional | 625 | 29.5 |
| General Service | 963 | 45.6 |
| Field Service | 65 | 3.1 |
| Local level | 200 | 9.5 |
| National Officers | 200 | 9.5 |
| United Nations Volunteers | 22 | 1.0 |
| **Total** | **2 113** | **100** |

*Source*: Data compiled by OIOS based on data provided by entities.

28. The Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Public Information held the highest level post fully dedicated to public information in the Secretariat. Most high-level posts were in the Department (3 posts at the D-2 level, 1 D-2 post in the Spokesperson's Office and 20 posts at the D-1 level).[7] In the field, the highest ranking public information officers were at the D-2 level in the African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), 7 D-1 posts at peacekeeping missions (UNAMA, UNAMI, UNMIL, UNMIS, the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), MONUSCO and MINUSTAH), and P-5 or P-4 posts at the majority of the other missions.[8]

**The majority of public information posts were funded from the regular budget**

29. Public information posts were funded from different budgetary sources, with the regular budget providing the most funding followed by the peacekeeping budget, extrabudgetary funding and lastly the peacekeeping support account.

[7] Of these D-1s, 10 are located at Headquarters, 1 at the United Nations information service in Geneva, 1 at the United Nations information service in Vienna and 8 in different United Nations information centres.

[8] The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL) has one National Officer and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia has two General Service staff dedicated to public information.

Table 3
**Total number of public information posts at the Secretariat and related entities by funding source**

| *Funding source* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|
| Regular budget | 48.3 |
| Peacekeeping budget | 38.9 |
| Extrabudgetary | 12.4 |
| Peacekeeping support account | 0.4 |
| **Total** | **100** |

*Source*: Data compiled by OIOS based on data provided by entities.

### An additional 130 posts were reported as partially involved in public information activities Secretariat-wide

30. Twenty-seven of the reporting entities stated that, in addition to fully dedicated public information posts, there were posts partially dedicated to that function; in total there were 130 such posts. These posts were filled by staff in different professional categories who had undertaken additional work in the area of public information. For example, high-level officials or directors would volunteer for public speaking events, in response to media inquiries or other requests. Furthermore, a review of senior management compacts for 2009-2011 revealed that there was a generic formulation regarding the commitment and the responsibility of senior managers to participate in advocating the policies and promoting the image of the Organization. On average, those in such partially dedicated posts spent 40 per cent of their time on public information.

### Non-post (financial) resources of nearly $50 million financed various public information activities

31. In addition to post resources, there were also non-post (financial) resources from all funding sources for public information activities, including for consultants, travel, television and video production, translation, and website maintenance. Eight entities (the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Management, the Department of Safety and Security, the Office to the Special Adviser on Africa, the Peacebuilding Support Office, UNIPSIL, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and the United Nations Compensation Commission) indicated no non-post (financial) resources, and over half of the entities provided monetary figures for the non-post resources amounting to nearly $50 million. The level of non-post resources varied from as little as $2,000 (OIOS) to approximately $40 million (Department of Public Information).[9] Half of the focal points indicated that there were no dedicated resources for website maintenance in their respective budgets. Most entities had received technical assistance from the Department of Public Information in developing websites, the cost for the maintenance of which comes from within

[9] The Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts commented that it could not reconcile the numbers of resource levels with the number reflected in the revised appropriation.

existing resources for public information or other information technology staff at each entity.

## B. The structure of the public information function varied Secretariat-wide, with most entities having a direct reporting relationship to senior management

32. Apart from the Department of Public Information, entities of the Secretariat had three types of structural arrangements for the public information function: 45 had a dedicated office for the function; 8 had public information staff but no dedicated office; and 11 had no dedicated office or public information staff. These 11 usually had non-public information staff undertaking public information activities as part of other duties and relied on the Department of Public Information or the nearest United Nations Information Service or United Nations Information Centre to meet their public information needs.

33. Most substantive entities had dedicated offices and were staffed with public information staff members. Non-substantive entities did not have public information capacity or a dedicated office, unless required by a specific project, such as the capital master plan within the Department of Management. Otherwise, staff members located in the front office of the entity typically performed public information activities, as needed. These non-substantive offices also relied either on the Department of Public Information or on a United Nations information centre if located in close proximity.

34. Field missions had dedicated public information offices, with peacekeeping missions having larger staffed offices than special political missions. The size of the office tended to vary according to the size of the mission, with larger peacekeeping missions tending to have more staff in their public information office. Special political missions had smaller offices, oftentimes with only one staff member; most with relatively larger offices were either administered by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNAMA and UNAMI) or had transitioned recently from being a peacekeeping mission (the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) and the United Nations Operation in Burundi (BNUB)). In terms of Headquarters support for the field missions, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support had nine posts, including a Public Affairs Section in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The Department of Political Affairs, by contrast, had no dedicated office or regular budgeted post at Headquarters, despite public information-related responsibilities, including managing numerous special political missions and good office efforts.

35. A review of Secretary-General bulletins and organizational charts showed a variety of titles, placement and roles of dedicated public information offices. The titles of the public information offices included reference to public information, advocacy, public affairs, external/media relations, outreach and information technology. For example, "public affairs" was referenced by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, "outreach" by the Office of Disarmament Affairs, "advocacy" by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

and "communications" by UNEP.[10] Other bodies, such as the Department of Management and the Department for Economic and Social Affairs, put more emphasis on the information technology aspect of the function. Notably, while the bulletin on the organization of the Department of Political Affairs places specific emphasis on managing media relations in coordination with the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General and the Department of Public Information, there was no corresponding coordination prescribed in the bulletins of other Secretariat entities. Peacekeeping and special political missions have designated public information offices that focus on public information regarding the mandate of the mission.

36. Furthermore, of the various structural arrangements for public information, 50 had a direct reporting relationship with senior management, reporting to the Under-Secretary-General, a Special Representative of the Secretary-General or an Executive Secretary of one of the entities of the United Nations system.

## C. A broad range of public information activities were undertaken across the Secretariat

### Public information activities fell into four broad categories

37. Public information is a broad function comprising many differing activities beyond the exclusive scope of dedicated public information offices. Official responses to the document request and interview data on the types of activities undertaken yielded a vast array of activities revealing that many different tools and approaches are used in this field of work. Both traditional and new forms of media dissemination were included in the four broad categories of public information:

(a) **Strategic communications**: focuses on formulating communications strategies on priority issues and undertaking communications campaigns to support substantive goals of specific entities and the Organization;

(b) **News and media**: focuses on providing accurate, balanced and, as feasible, customized news and information materials and services, including through radio, television, photography, print and the Internet, to media and other users globally;

(c) **Outreach**: focuses on engaging various audiences such as civil society, Member States and non-governmental organizations to educate and encourage support for the ideals of the Organization;

(d) **Publications**: focuses on providing varied types of publications such as magazines, journals and books on work done in support of the ideals of the Organization.

38. In addition, the regional commissions and the special political and peacekeeping missions were also involved, to varying degrees, in strengthening the individual and institutional capacities of local journalists and media. The common element across all the entities was that the public information activities undertaken focused on the specialized mandate of each entity. In addition, the entities undertook

[10] ST/SGB/2010/9, ST/SGB/2010/4, ST/SGB/2008/8, ST/SGB/2007/7, ST/SGB/2006/13 and ST/SGB/1997/9.

other Secretariat-wide activities on broader communications priorities and campaigns, as feasible.

**Most activities fell within the categories of strategic communications, news and media, and outreach**

39. Entities undertook all public information activities to some extent, but those in the strategic communications, news and media, and outreach categories were the most common. According to the focal point survey, under the three categories, over 80 per cent reported the following activities:

(a) Website content management;

(b) Drafting of press releases;

(c) Seminars, workshops and briefings for external audiences;

(d) Planning and undertaking communications campaigns on specific issues;

(e) Developing messages for public dissemination;

(f) Daily handling of media inquiries.

40. The next most common type of public information activities fell within the news and media, strategic communications and publications categories, with over 70 per cent of the entities reporting the following:

(a) Drafting articles and op-ed pieces;

(b) Website content development;

(c) Media monitoring and internal news review;

(d) Drafting fact sheets;

(e) Brochures and newsletters.

41. Lastly, mid-range frequency of activities, reported in the 50 to 60 per cent range by the entities, fell into the outreach category and involved relations with non-governmental organizations, civil society and Member States.

42. Focal point interview data also highlighted that the range of public information activities in substantive entities was broader than in non-substantive entities. Most substantive entities Secretariat-wide undertook all types of activities according to their respective workplans and mandates. The common focus in all cases was on devising strategic communications to explain the goals, related activities and outputs of their respective mandates to the public. Substantive entities with field operations and large extrabudgetary funding undertook the greatest scope of activities. Likewise, field-based entities usually had their own spokespersons who could call on the assistance of the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, as needed.

43. The more limited activities undertaken by non-substantive entities tended to be discrete tasks, such as media coverage or updating websites with ad hoc guidance from the Department of Public Information or a United Nations information centre, if located nearby, and consultation, as necessary, with senior management at the Secretariat, either the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and/or the Office of Spokesperson for the Secretary-General.

44. Public information activities were mostly undertaken in English and French, the working languages of the Organization. Only official documents were produced in the six official languages. Translation of non-official documents into official languages was completed according to necessity owing to the absence of dedicated resources at each entity. Public information in local languages was also acknowledged by all focal points as taking priority when those languages were not among the six official languages, with the skills of staff members being utilized to carry out the translations.

45. All focal points reported undertaking public information with a gender mainstreaming perspective. Field missions, in particular, were aware of, and active in, incorporating gender mainstreaming into activities, for example, outreach campaigns such as the 16-day campaign to end violence against women and seminar programmes on public information skills in field missions, which were developed in order to address both men and women. It was considered that the limited public information work carried out by administrative entities did not require a gender mainstreaming perspective, given the nature of their work.

## D. The United Nations Communications Group provides formal system-wide coordination of public information while Secretariat-wide coordination is informal

### Frequency of coordination between entities varied

46. Coordination of public information occurred in three ways: formally system-wide through the United Nations Communications Group; informally Secretariat-wide; and through other ad hoc informal networks. The focus of all coordination efforts was to avoid duplication, achieve maximum synergy, ensure a common United Nations message and present "One United Nations".

47. The frequency of coordination among public information functions varied, as illustrated in table 4.

Table 4
**Frequency of coordination between Secretariat entities, the Department of Public Information and other entities of the United Nations system**
(Percentage)

| *Secretariat entities coordinate with* | *Department of Public Information* | *Other Secretariat entities* | *Other entities of the United Nations system* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Always | 21 | 9 | 5 |
| Very often | 21 | 26 | 22 |
| Often | 26 | 17 | 24 |
| Not very often | 31 | 43 | 39 |
| Never | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| No basis for judgement | 0 | 5 | 5 |

*Source*: Focal point survey, OIOS public information review, 2010-2011.

**System-wide coordination by the United Nations Communications Group provided a common platform with varying degrees of participation**

48. All focal points, except one, recognized that the United Nations Communications Group was the system-wide coordinating mechanism for public information. Most focal points (69.7 per cent) reported being members of the Communications Group, while the remaining 30.3 per cent were not members according to the focal point survey. Levels of engagement differed at Headquarters and at the country level. At Headquarters, focal points noted attendance at weekly meetings was not regular but was rather contingent on the relevance of the agenda to an entity's programme of work and available time. Three focal points reported that they had participated in Communications Group task forces for specific events, for example, the 20-year review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the 2010 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Cancún, Mexico. At the country level, focal points reported regular attendance at meetings of the Communications Group, with increased engagement when working on common events, such as various international days. The Communications Group has also issued guidance on various public information topics for the purpose of discussing policy issues and agreeing on common responses, programmes of activity and procedures, including standard operating procedures for crisis communications and the ongoing effort on new media guidelines.

**Secretariat-wide coordination is informal owing to the fact that the Department of Public Information does not have a formal mandate for that role**

49. While the Department of Public Information is the main department dedicated to the public information function, providing overall guidance in that regard, it does not have a formal mandate to coordinate public information activities within the Secretariat. The entities of the Secretariat undertook public information activities in a discrete decentralized manner with a focus on their respective mandates. Coordination has been internal at each entity based on an overall strategy and guidance from senior management and substantive departments for specific topics or events.

50. Coordination guidance from Headquarters offices of the various United Nations entities was sought when substantive input was needed. For example, the focal points of peacekeeping and special political missions noted that they sought guidance from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, respectively, as needed, on substantive matters rather than on issues specific to public information. The focal points also referred to the Public Affairs Section of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Peace and Security Section of the Department of Public Information as the bodies responsible for coordination on peace and security issues. The annual meeting organized by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Peace and Security Section of the Department of Public Information for the chiefs of public information at field-based missions was also referenced by the focal points as being a good opportunity to network and coordinate on specific issues. The Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations coordinated activities formally through the jointly chaired Public Information Working Group, which meets twice monthly for planning and trouble-shooting and in order to reach agreement on approaches to mid- and long-term peace and security issues, as well as the coordination of communications in the event of crisis.

51. Focal points also indicated that coordination with the Department of Public Information and other Secretariat entities occurred on an "as needed" basis. Two main tools were used to facilitate Secretariat-wide public information coordination: the annual communications priorities and campaigns circulated by the Department of Public Information, which entities implemented, as feasible, given work demands and plans; and liaison with senior management offices, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General. In addition, daily morning meetings were held by the Communications and Speechwriting Unit of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General with various attendees, including substantive departments as necessary, the Spokesperson and staff of the Department of Public Information. These meetings were further enhanced by "network" meetings on various topical issues, as necessary, based on planned events, for example the referendum in the Sudan.

**Other ad hoc informal coordination provided a source for information sharing and lessons learned**

52. All focal point interviewees noted that additional informal coordination occurred based on personal relationships with other public information professionals both within the Secretariat and at other entities of the United Nations system. Focal points noted that this informal coordination and networking was utilized for sharing information and lessons learned. Almost half of focal point survey respondents (46.5 per cent) were also aware of other coordination mechanisms, including working groups on specific substantive issues and specialized public information techniques.

**The United Nations Communications Group and ongoing Secretariat-wide coordination is perceived as efficient**

53. The coordination of public information activities organized formally by the United Nations Communications Group and informally within the Secretariat were perceived by focal points as being efficient, overall, with focal points giving the highest efficiency rating to both the Communications Group and Secretariat entities for ensuring a common message.

Table 5
**Degree of satisfaction with communications coordination by the United Nations Communications Group and entities of the Secretariat***
(Percentage)

| *Purpose of coordination* | *Efficiency of coordination by the United Nations Communications Group* | *Efficiency of coordination by the Secretariat* |
|---|---|---|
| Coordination prevents duplication of work | 60 | 61.9 |
| Helps save time | 63.3 | 62.8 |
| Ensures a common message | 80 | 73.8 |

*Source*: Focal point survey, OIOS public information review, 2010-2011.
* Data indicates that respondents indicated "strongly agreed" and "somewhat agreed".

## E. Coordination of public information activities was challenged owing to the wide scope of work undertaken by the United Nations, unclear public information roles and the lack of a strategic plan

54. All focal points surveyed and interviewed noted the vital role that public information played in ensuring a unified presentation of the work of the United Nations. It was noted, however, that the wide scope of work created challenges to efficient coordination since entities tended to focus on their respective mandates, as a result of which they took part in coordinating only campaigns related to broad topics or discrete, reoccurring issues such as international days.

55. Interviews with focal points and survey data also highlighted that the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Public Information vis-à-vis Secretariat entities were particularly unclear in terms of guidance and coordination. There was an assumption by focal points that the Department, as the main department that undertakes the public information function, had a coordinating role to play, but there was a lack of knowledge as to whether it in fact had such a mandate. As noted in section D above, a formal coordination authority has not been given to the Department of Public Information.

56. As regards the roles of senior officials in the field of public information at the United Nations, namely the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Public Information and the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, it was unclear as to which position took the lead in this area. For example, the need to immediately connect to the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General in the event of crisis situations was well understood by all focal points, whereas there was no such urgent need in terms of contacting the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Public Information. In addition, the placement of this Office within the Department of Public Information in terms of budgetary and administrative purposes did not help to clarify those roles. The Spokesperson is among those who engage closely with the Secretary-General.[11] The fact that the budget and the administration of the Office of the Spokesperson are under the Department of Public Information is not mirrored by the direction of priorities by the Under-Secretary-General of the Department, de facto control of operational work nor the Spokesperson's performance assessment. Without a clear alignment between resources, responsibilities and results, the current arrangement created a risk of ambiguity regarding lines of authority and accountability associated with the Office of the Spokesperson and the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Public Information. The Executive Office of the Secretary-General highlighted the difference between the role of the Under-Secretary-General of the Department and that of the Office of the Spokesperson, noting that the Under-Secretary-General, through the Department, takes the lead on broad public information policy covering the Organization as a whole, both in terms of its immediate and its longer-term focus, covering broader aspects of public information about global awareness and understanding of the work of the United Nations. The role of the Office of the Spokesperson is much more limited and more directly related to the needs of the

[11] In the 2009 job listing for the post of Spokesperson the post is described as being affiliated with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, with an express notation that the appointment of the Spokesperson is under the discretionary authority of the Secretary-General.

Secretary-General, that is, to be able to respond and to be seen as responding to and anticipating news developments as they break each day. In that respect, the Spokesperson is an important part of the Executive Office. The Executive Office recognized that there are arguments for and against the hybrid administrative placement of the Office as it exists, but noted that ultimately it is for the Secretary-General to decide what works best and to ensure that the arrangement runs smoothly, with both transparency and a clear understanding of the current working relationship that has, until the present time, been working in a very pragmatic way.

57. The lack of a strategic plan in the area of public information has also impeded the efficient coordination of overall activities. Focal points viewed the development of a strategic plan as a necessary coordination tool in determining the priorities and the vision of United Nations public information activities as well as in providing a framework for a common approach to the coordination of communications both at Headquarters and in the field. While the Department of Public Information noted that the Secretary-General's Policy Committee decision No. 2008/23 on United Nations communication provided a broad framework, it lacked specificity regarding priorities and focal points were unaware of it. With regard to the need for a strategic plan, the Department doubted that such a plan would assist the Organization to better respond to current needs. The Department proposed that, as recommended by the United Nations Communications Group itself, it should be integrated at the principal level, into the preparation of the semi-annual meetings of the CEB High-level Committee on Programmes as a means to linking United Nations policy and communications more closely.

## V. Conclusion

58. The public information function and its organizational framework have grown larger than the original department established for that role. At present there are 2,113 full-time posts (4 per cent of Secretariat staff) and nearly $50 million dollars in non-post resources directly devoted to the function. A vast array of activities have been undertaken by decentralized public information offices, providing key information on respective mandates and activities and constituting the critical link between the public and the United Nations, particularly at field-based missions where public support is critical.

59. While the coordination of public information was rated as being efficient overall, and its benefits acknowledged in terms of presenting a common message and "One United Nations", such coordination has remained largely informal within the Secretariat. Efficient coordination is challenged by differing mandates, the lack of clear direction and vision from senior leadership, and the unclear role and lack of coordination mandate of the Department of Public Information.

60. Given the breadth of the function Secretariat-wide, its dedicated resources and its critical role in communicating the goals and work of the Organization, several issues must be addressed, including: the role of the Department of Public Information in terms of coordinating the function within the Secretariat; the role of other entities in the Secretariat; priorities for coordinated activities; and the need for a strategic plan for public information and communications. Addressing these issues would contribute to increased coordination and efficiency of the function and its related resources across the Secretariat.

# VI. Recommendation

61. The Department of Public Information, taking into account the role of the Secretary-General in setting the vision and the priority issues of the Organization, should develop and present to the Committee on Information an action plan that considers the roles and responsibilities for coordination of the public information function in the Secretariat, including:

(a) The role of the Department of Public Information;

(b) The role of other Secretariat entities;

(c) Priorities of any coordination activities;

(d) The need for a strategic plan for public information and communications in the Secretariat that outlines a vision and broad priority issues of commonality and addresses the priorities and vision of the Secretary-General for the function;

(e) The need to maintain data on post and non-post resources with levels and funding sources dedicated to public information as presented in the present report.

**Paragraphs 19 to 31 and 46 to 57**

62. *The Department of Public Information does not agree that a strategic plan, as described in the OIOS recommendation, would allow the Organization to communicate more effectively. The current structure, which combines a long-term communications policy approved by the Secretary-General with shorter-term communications priorities and campaigns, presents a pragmatic, flexible approach. It allows the Organization to respond to both long-term mandates and breaking news. The Department also stated that, with regard to the need to maintain data on post and non-post resources, it is clearly beyond the purview of the Department to solicit information on public information resources from other Secretariat entities.*

63. *The Executive Office of the Secretary-General stated that the Department of Public Information needs dedicated resources to support the Executive Office in developing a strategic communications plan for executing the priorities of the United Nations.*

(*Signed*) Carman L. **Lapointe**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services
25 July 2011

# Annex I

## Total number of public information posts in the Secretariat and related entities by level

The following table details post numbers and levels for public information at entities that follow United Nations rules and regulations and are subject to the oversight of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). There were no public information posts in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Political Affairs, OIOS, the Office of Legal Affairs, the Peacebuilding Support Office, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, the United Nations Compensation Commission, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships. The resources analysed for the review were taken from: the regular budget for the biennium 2010-2011; the peacekeeping and support account budget for the period from 1 July to 30 June 2011; and the special political mission budgets for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2010.

(table on next page)

| | Number of posts by level | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *USG* | *D-2* | *D-1* | *P-5* | *P-4* | *P-3* | *P-2* | *P-1* | *GS* | *FS* | *NO* | *LL* | *UNV* | *Total*[a] |
| | **1** | **6** | **31** | **73** | **191** | **248** | **112** | **1** | **963** | **65** | **200** | **200** | **22** | **2 113** |
| Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | **1** |
| Department of Economic and Social Affairs | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | **1** |
| Department of Field Support | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | **1** |
| Department of Management | | | | | 1 | | | | 10 | | | | | **11** |
| Department of Political Affairs | | | | | | | | | | | | | | **0** |
| Special political missions | | | | | | | | | | | | | | **99** |
| BINUCA | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | 2 | | 1 | | | **5** |
| BNUB | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 9 | 1 | 1 | | 2 | **17** |
| UNAMA | | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 8 | | 9 | 1 | 17 | | | **44** |
| UNAMI[b] | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | | 8 | | 4 | | | **18** |
| UNIOGBIS | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | 2 | 1 | | **5** |
| UNIPSIL | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | **1** |
| UNOWA | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | **1** |
| UNPOS | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | **3** |
| UNRCCA | | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | **2** |
| UNSCO | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | **2** |
| UNSCOL | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | **1** |
| Department of Public Information[c] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Of which: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | **782** |
| Headquarters[d] | 1 | 4 | 10 | 22 | 64 | 82 | 55 | | 246 | | | | | **484** |
| United Nations Information Service at the United Nations Office at Geneva[e] | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | | 14 | | | | | **26** |
| United Nations Information Service at the United Nations Office at Vienna[f] | | | 1 | | 1 | 2 | 2 | | 5 | | | | | **11** |
| United Nations Information Centre at the United Nations Office at Nairobi | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | 1 | 3 | | **6** |
| United Nations information centres[g] | | | 8 | 11 | 9 | 8 | | | | | 44 | 164 | | **244** |
| Field offices | | | | 3 | 1 | | | | | | | 7 | | **11** |

| | Number of posts by level | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *USG* | *D-2* | *D-1* | *P-5* | *P-4* | *P-3* | *P-2* | *P-1* | *GS* | *FS* | *NO* | *LL* | *UNV* | ***Total*** |
| Department of Peacekeeping Operations | | | | 1 | 3 | 2 | | | 2 | | | | | **8** |
| Peacekeeping missions[h] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | **823** |
| MINURSO | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | **1** |
| MINUSTAH | | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 11 | 2 | | 60 | 8 | 11 | | 8 | **104** |
| MONUSCO | | | 1 | 2 | 7 | 14 | 6 | | 178 | 12 | 17 | | | **237** |
| UNAMID | | 1 | | 2 | 8 | 15 | 1 | | | 16 | | | | **43** |
| UNFICYP | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 5 | | | | | **7** |
| UNIFIL | | | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | | 5 | 2 | 6 | | | **18** |
| UNMIK | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 9 | | | | 1 | **12** |
| UNMIL | | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 1 | | 38 | 5 | 3 | | 5 | **61** |
| UNMIS | | | 1 | 2 | 10 | 5 | 1 | | 115 | 12 | 21 | | | **167** |
| UNMIT | | | 1 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 1 | | 18 | 4 | 13 | | 3 | **52** |
| UNOCI | | | | | 3 | 9 | | | 78 | 3 | 25 | | 3 | **121** |
| Department of Safety and Security | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | **2** |
| ECA | | | | 1 | 2 | 4 | | | | | 5 | | | **12** |
| ECE | | | | 1 | | | | | 3 | | | | | **4** |
| EOSG | | 1 | | 2 | 2 | | | | 2 | | | | | **7** |
| ESCAP | | | | 1 | | 1 | 2 | | 5 | | | | | **9** |
| ECLAC | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 5 | | | | | **8** |
| ESCWA[i] | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 2 | | 1 | | | **5** |
| ICTR | | | | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 | | 12 | | | | | **21** |
| ICTY | | | | | 2 | 4 | 5 | | 15 | | | | | **26** |
| OCHA | | | | | 9 | 9 | 3 | | | | | | | **21** |
| ODA | | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | **2** |
| OHCHR | | | | 1 | 4 | 8 | | | 8 | | 7 | | | **28** |
| OHRLLS | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | **2** |
| OICT | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | **1** |
| OSAA | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | **1** |
| UNCTAD | | | | | 2 | 3 | 1 | | 6 | | | | | **12** |
| UNEP | | | 1 | 2 | 14 | 9 | 7 | | 22 | | | | | **55** |
| UN-Habitat | | | | 2 | 2 | 2 | | | | | 1 | | | **7** |
| UNHCR | | | 1 | 3* | 18 | 13 | 1 | | 57 | | 19 | | | **112** |
| UNODC | | | | 1 | | 1 | 3 | | 4 | | | | | **9** |

| | Number of posts by level | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *USG* | *D-2* | *D-1* | *P-5* | *P-4* | *P-3* | *P-2* | *P-1* | *GS* | *FS* | *NO* | *LL* | *UNV* | *Total*[a] |
| UNRWA | | | 1 | 1 | | 2 | | | | | | 25 | | **29** |
| Other Secretariat-related entities | | | | | | | | | | | | | | **17** |
| UNCCD | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 2 | | | | | **4** |
| UNFCCC | | | 1 | 1 | | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | | | | | **12** |
| UNITAR | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | **1** |

*Source*: Compiled by OIOS based on data provided by entities.

*Abbreviations*: BINUCA, United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic; BNUB, United Nations Office in Burundi; CAAC, Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict; ECA, Economic Commission for Africa; ECE, Economic Commission for Europe; ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; EOSG, Executive Office of the Secretary-General; ESCAP, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; ESCWA, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; FS, Field Service; GS, General Service; ICTR, International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda; ICTY, International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia; LL, Local level; MINURSO, United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara; MONUSCO, United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; MINUSTAH, United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti; NO, National Officer; OCHA, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; ODA, Office for Disarmament Affairs; OHCHR, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; OHRLLS, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; OICT, Office of Information and Communications Technology; OSAA, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa; UNAMA, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan; UNAMI, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq; UNAMID, African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur; UNCCD, (secretariat of) United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; UNCTAD, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; UNEP, United Nations Environment Programme; UNFCCC, (secretariat of) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; UNFICYP, United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus; UN-Habitat, United Nations Human Settlements Programme; UNHCR, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; UNIFIL, United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon; UNIOGBIS, United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau; UNIPSIL, United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone; UNITAR, United Nations Institute for Training and Research; UNMIK, United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo; UNMIS, United Nations Mission in the Sudan; UNMIT, United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste; UNOCI, United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire; UNODC, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; UNOWA, United Nations Office for West Africa; UNPOS, United Nations Political Office for Somalia; UNRCCA, United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia; UNRWA, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; UNSCO, Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process; UNSCOL, United Nations Special Coordinator for Emergency Relief Operations in Liberia; UNV, United Nations Volunteers; USG, Under-Secretary-General.

[a] To avoid double counting the total reflects subtracting the 3 posts at the United Nations Information Centre in Beirut that belong to the Department of Public Information.

[b] UNAMI and UNAMA are administered by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

[c] In addition to the 738 posts under the budget section for the Department of Public Information, it also provided an additional 44 posts from other budget sections that undertake public information functions, the Africa Section, Visitor Services and Income Sections at Headquarters and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna. As a result of the additional 44 posts, the Office for Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts stated that it was not possible to reconcile the numbers of posts and resources with the number reflected in the revised appropriation.

[d] Including 7 posts from the Africa Section; 33 posts from the Visitor Services and Income Sections.

[e] Including 3 posts from the Visitor Service at the United Nations Office at Geneva.

[f] Including 1 post from the Visitor Service of the United Nations Office at Vienna.

[g] The Department of Public Information commented that this includes 72 non-public information staff. The posts from the United Nations Information Centre at the United Nations Office at Nairobi were removed from the overall count of information centres so that the United Nations Office posts could be represented separately.

[h] UNMOGIP did not provide a focal point.

[i] Three (3) posts at ESCWA are part of the budget of the Department of Public Information for the United Nations information centre in Beirut.

# Annex II

## Text of the comments received from the Department of Public Information, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts on the review

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) presents below the full text of comments received from the Department of Public Information, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts on the review contained in the present report. This practice has been instituted in line with General Assembly resolution 64/263, following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee. The Department of Public Information and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General raised concerns regarding the recommendation on the strategic plan for public information and resources needed to undertake this effort. The Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts raised concerns regarding the number of public information posts in the Department of Public Information. The comments from all entities on the draft OIOS report have been incorporated, as appropriate, into the final report.

### A. Comments received from the Department of Public Information

We would like to extend our appreciation to the staff of OIOS for their efforts in the course of preparing this review. The outcome of the review emphasizes the importance of public information as a key component of the Secretariat's work. The Department of Public Information fully endorses the conclusion of the report that effective communication is critical to generating public support for the Organization. Accordingly, the Department feels that the resource level provided for public information should be commensurate with the central importance of communication to the work of the United Nations. Furthermore, the Department supports the current institutional arrangements for public information across Secretariat entities.

As the work of the Organization has grown, especially at the local level and through its field operations, so too has the work of public information professionals. In order to raise support for the priority issues of the Organization, communications professionals across the Secretariat have to interact with many different audiences and stakeholders, in multiple languages.

A rapidly changing communications and media environment and an explosion of new information and communication technologies provide enormous opportunities for the Secretariat to inform and engage new audiences. New, decentralized Internet and mobile-based platforms present challenges to old channels of communication, as well as to established ways of disseminating information. The information revolution, moreover, means that the demand for quality multimedia news products from the United Nations system is growing, and will continue to do so.

In order to meet the many challenges facing the communications field today, the United Nations needs a robust team of communications professionals, well-equipped to take advantage of today's media opportunities. The Department of

Public Information has a unique set of resources and expertise in television, radio, online news, social media, thematic campaigns and outreach projects to promote the work of the United Nations worldwide.

Please find below specific comments on the findings and recommendations contained in the report:

**Paragraph 57**

With regard to the decision of the Secretary-General's Policy Committee on United Nations Communications cited in the report, this policy was circulated to all senior managers Secretariat-wide. The Department agrees that this decision should be made more widely available to all communications focal points in the Secretariat. In the view of the Department, an approach based on the United Nations Communications Group as a coordination mechanism and an information-sharing forum, a set of agreed-upon communications priorities and the Policy Committee decision is a more effective way to develop specific communications strategies on an ongoing basis than the attempt to draft a singular strategic plan. The Department has serious doubts that such a plan would assist the Organization to better respond to current needs. The Department proposes that the United Nations Communications Group, at the principal level, be integrated into the preparation of the semi-annual meetings of the High-Level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) as a means to linking United Nations policy and communications more closely, as recommended earlier by the Communications Group.

**Paragraph 61**

As noted above, the Department does not agree that a strategic plan, as described in the recommendation, would allow the Organization to communicate more effectively. The current structure, which combines a long-term, Secretary-General-approved communications policy with shorter-term communications priorities and campaigns, presents a pragmatic, flexible approach. It allows the Organization to respond both to long-term mandates and breaking news.

With regard to the need to maintain data on post and non-post resources, it is clearly beyond the purview of the Department to solicit information on public information resources from other Secretariat entities.

## B. Comments received from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General

1. Further to the initial comments of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General submitted on 15 July 2011, please find below (and as previously indicated) a further submission from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General with regard to the administrative concerns outlined in paragraph 56 of the review.

2. With respect to paragraph 56 of the final draft report, it would seem there is a perception that the roles of the Department of Public Information and the Spokesperson's Office are unclear. If this is the perception, then, irrespective of the facts, we need to do something to explain the difference.

3. The Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Public Information, through the Department, takes the lead on broad public information policy covering the Organization as a whole, both in terms of its immediate and its longer-term focus. This covers the broader aspects of public information about global awareness and understanding of the work of the United Nations.

4. The role of the Office of the Spokesperson is much more limited. It is directly related to the needs of the Secretary-General to be able to and to be seen as responding to and anticipating news developments as they break each day. The Spokesperson's responsibility, thus, is:

- To respond to and anticipate breaking news developments;
- To brief the Secretary-General on news developments and how he should respond, and to secure the guidance necessary for that;
- To handle media inquiries relating to the Secretary-General and the United Nations more broadly, either directly or by ensuring that the right entity within the United Nations responds.

5. Given this requirement, it is of course natural that the Spokesperson and the Office of the Spokesperson should have a direct conduit to the Secretary-General and the Executive Office because of the real time and direct responsibility the Office has both in the management of the public responses of the Secretary-General to issues he faces each day, as well as their impact on the image of the Organization.

6. In this respect, the Spokesperson is an important part of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. It would, however, be inaccurate to speak of any "cabinet". Indeed the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Public Information is a member of the Senior Management Group and is a frequent commentator in that group as well as at the Secretary-General's Senior Advisers' meetings.

7. However, the Spokesperson, due to the demands of his office, is required to be among the first persons to meet with the Secretary-General each day, both to brief him of the breaking news stories as well as to take directions on how he should respond to questions from the media.

8. The question of where the Office of the Spokesperson should sit administratively is not new. His link with both the Department of Public Information and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General are critically necessary. There are arguments for and against the hybrid arrangement that exists, but ultimately it is for the Secretary-General to decide what works best in any given situation. The most important factor is to ensure that the arrangement works smoothly and that there is both transparency and a clear understanding of the working relationships between the two in real terms. With the new trio of directors in the Department of Public Information, this arrangement is working smoothly and in a very pragmatic way. The Under-Secretary-General of the Department has made a point of including the Office of the Spokesperson in all stages of the budget discussions that affect his functioning.

9. Clearly, the role of the Department of Public Information goes far beyond the very targeted responsibilities of the Office of the Spokesperson, as outlined on its website page:

"As the public voice of the United Nations, the Department of Public Information promotes global awareness and greater understanding of the work of the United Nations, using various communications tools including radio, television, print, the Internet, videoconferencing and, increasingly, other new information technologies. The United Nations website is one of the main sources of information about the activities of the Organization. The website is managed by the Department of Public Information. The United Nations News Centre features the latest news from the United Nations and the Secretary-General. Field reports, news and feature programmes on peacekeeping and humanitarian affairs are a staple of United Nations radio programmes. Unifeed enables news providers to cover important global issues by offering timely broadcast-quality video from throughout the United Nations system. United Nations publications is the source for titles produced by the United Nations and its key agencies. UN Works is an innovative multimedia platform that puts a human face on the work of the United Nations by exploring global issues through the personal stories of people and their communities. All these are managed by the DPI. Along with its global network of information centres, the Department of Public Information works with media, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations in bringing the core messages of the United Nations to people around the world."

10. For ease of reference, please also see below the comments of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General on the draft report, which were submitted on 15 July 2011:

**Paragraph 51**

The name of the unit in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General is Communications and Speechwriting Unit.

**Paragraph 56**

Reference to the Spokesperson being a member of the Secretary-General's "cabinet" may be misleading. There is no official designation of or use of the word "cabinet". It should be sufficient to delete the term and the sentence to read: "The Spokesperson is among those who engage closely with the Secretary-General."

**Paragraph 61**

The fourth bullet disregards the role of the Secretary-General in setting "vision and broad priority issues" for the Organization. Outlining a vision and setting broad priority issues is the Secretary-General's role. The Department of Public Information needs dedicated resources to support the Executive Office of the Secretary-General in developing a strategic communications plan for executing those priorities.

11. I hope that OIOS will find these comments helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further clarifications or queries on this matter.

(*Signed*) Parfait **Onanga-Anyanga**
19 July 2011

## C. Comments received from the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts

I wish to reiterate the comments sent by the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts to OIOS in an e-mail from Ms. Helene Thorup-Hayes, dated 24 May 2011, with regard to the concern that the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts has about the number of public information posts in the Department of Public Information, as reflected in tables 1, 2, 3, and annex I, as well as non-post resources in paragraph 31, of the final OIOS report.

It is of concern to the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts that OIOS appears to be providing information in the final report based on its internal calculation of costs related to the posts as well as figures and numbers provided by the Department of Public Information. The Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts wishes to reiterate that it is not possible to reconcile these numbers of posts and resource levels with the number reflected in the revised appropriation.

The Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts is pleased to note that its comments with regard to paragraphs 26 and 66 of the draft report have been taken into consideration.

(*Signed*) Jun **Yamazaki**
20 July 2011

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**Sixty-sixth session**
Item 28 (a) of the provisional agenda*
**Advancement of women**

# Improvement of the situation of women in rural areas

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/140, reviews the activities undertaken by Member States and United Nations entities to empower rural women and contains recommendations for consideration by the Assembly.

* A/66/150.

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# I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 64/140 on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the resolution at its sixty-sixth session. In response to that request, the present report provides an assessment of the situation of rural women, highlighting the efforts of Member States,[1] the United Nations system[2] and other actors to address the obstacles and challenges that impede progress towards the economic empowerment of rural women and to enable them to improve their lives and livelihoods. It contains recommendations for consideration by the Assembly.

2. At the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals in 2010, Member States highlighted rural women as critical agents for enhancing agricultural and rural development and food security and pledged to ensure equal access for rural women to productive resources, land, financing, technologies, training and markets.[3] In the Istanbul Programme of Action (A/CONF.219/3), Member States reaffirmed those commitments.

3. At its fifty-sixth session in 2012, the Commission on the Status of Women will consider the "Empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges" as its priority theme. In accordance with its methods of work, the Commission is expected to adopt a set of agreed conclusions on the priority theme that identify gaps and challenges in the implementation of previous commitments and make action-oriented recommendations in order to accelerate their implementation by all stakeholders.

# II. Background

4. The proportion of people living in extreme poverty — on less than $1.25 a day — in rural areas of developing countries dropped from 48 per cent to 34 per cent over the decade from 2000 to 2010, much of it owing to income gains in East Asia, particularly China. Despite income gains that have lifted more than 350 million rural people out of extreme poverty, poverty remains a massive and predominantly rural phenomenon, with 70 per cent of the 1.4 billion extremely poor in the developing world living in rural areas. Nearly one third of these live in sub-Saharan Africa, while South Asia is now home to about 50 per cent of them.[4]

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[1] Contributions were received from Canada, Denmark, El Salvador, Greece, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Togo and the United Arab Emirates.

[2] The following United Nations entities provided inputs: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank.

[3] See General Assembly resolution 65/1.

[4] IFAD, *Rural Poverty Report 2011* (Rome, 2011) available from www.ifad.org/rpr2011/report/e/rpr2011.pdf.

5. The persistence of rural poverty has meant that rural areas lag behind urban areas in almost all of the Millennium Development Goals. For example, only one third of rural women receive prenatal care compared to 50 per cent in developing regions as a whole. Child malnutrition in developing regions is twice as common in rural areas as in urban areas, owing to more restricted access to food, water and sanitation and health care, and children under 5 are more at risk of dying in rural than in urban households.[5]

6. Increasingly volatile food prices, the uncertainties and effects of climate change and a range of natural resource constraints further complicate efforts to reduce rural poverty and inequality and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. At the same time, changes in agricultural markets may give rise to new opportunities that can boost productivity for smallholder farmers in developing countries. Such changes will be necessary to ensure enough food for an increasingly urbanized global population, expected to reach at least 9 billion by 2050,[6] as well as equitable access to food in rural areas.

7. Continuing gender disparities in access to and control over resources, including technology, agricultural extension services and limited rural infrastructure, result in higher labour costs and lower productivity for women than men. When women have access to land, it is often of poorer quality and consists of smaller plots. Gender inequalities impose real costs on the agriculture sector, the broader economy and society, as well as on rural women themselves. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has calculated that if women had the same access to productive resources as men, their increased yields could raise total agricultural output in developing countries by an estimated 2.5 to 4 per cent, which could reduce the total number of hungry people by 12 to 17 per cent and contribute to improving family nutrition and health.[7] With equal access to property rights, technology and services, women could provide the engine of growth to break the poverty cycle.

8. While gross domestic product growth generated by agriculture has been shown to be twice as effective in reducing poverty as growth in other sectors,[8] macroeconomic policies, including market and trade liberalization, impact differently on women and men. Export-oriented agriculture in developing countries has promoted cash crop cultivation, resulting in volatile food prices and increased food insecurity, and poses particular challenges to subsistence farmers, the majority of whom are women.[9] Structural adjustment and budget stabilization policies have

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[5] United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010 and 2011* (New York, 2010 and 2011), available from www.un.org/millenniumgoals/reports.shtml.

[6] This projection assumes that fertility in all countries converges to replacement level. See United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, "World population prospects, the 2010 revision", available from http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Analytical-Figures/htm/fig_1.htm.

[7] FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture: Women in Agriculture, Closing the Gender Gap for Development* (Rome, 2010-2011), available from www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e.pdf.

[8] Speech by the President of IFAD at the second international conference on long-term investments in the age of globalization, Rome, 17 June 2010. See www.ifad.org/events/op/2010/ltic.htm.

[9] *2009 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Women's Control over Economic Resources and Access to Financial Resources, including Microfinance* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.IV.7).

focused on promoting privatization, deregulation of domestic markets and liberalization of trade and capital flows. Resulting reductions in government spending, including on essential rural infrastructure and public services, have made these services harder for women and girls to access while increasing the burden of unpaid care work.[10]

9. Currently, few countries systematically consider the differential impact of their agricultural policies and spending priorities by gender,[7] in part due to lack of sex-disaggregated household data level, as well as the failure to apply a gender impact analysis to such policies and priorities.

10. The international community can play an important role in terms of financial support to rural development and the agricultural sector. Statistics provided by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD-DAC) show that of the $7.5 billion in funding allocated to agriculture and rural development in 2008-2009, only 3 per cent of the amount screened for gender focus was allocated to programmes in which gender equality was a principal aim and 32 per cent to those in which gender equality was a secondary aim. The L'Aquila Food Security Initiative adopted at the Group of Eight summit in 2009 has mobilized pledges of over $22 billion to reverse the decline of investment in agriculture and improve food security. It will be critical to ensure that rural women are equal beneficiaries of these funds.[11]

11. To make real progress in rural development and sustainable agriculture, the power and creativity of rural women must be recognized, invested in and used. Improving women's access to resources, assets and decision-making and building individual and collective capacity would create local opportunities and help mitigate the risks they face. Asset accumulation, including land, livestock and other resources, can also build a buffer against shocks, which are expected to increase with climate change.

## III. Economic empowerment of women in rural areas

12. Rural women play a vital, yet not fully acknowledged, role in agriculture and rural development. For instance, women comprise 43 per cent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, ranging from 20 per cent in Latin America to almost 50 per cent in some parts of Africa and Asia. In South and East Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, women's share of agricultural employment within total employment is higher than that of men. In rural areas with high levels of male outmigration, women's roles in agriculture are expanding, leading to dramatic changes in their responsibilities and tasks.[7]

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[10] Unpaid care work includes both personal care (e.g. children, the sick and the elderly) and care-related activities (e.g. fetching water and firewood, cooking, cleaning and washing). See also UNDP policy brief, "Unpaid care work", Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction series No. 1, October 2009, available from http://content.undp.org/go/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=3231016.

[11] *Muskoka Accountability Report: Assessing Action and Results Against Development-Related Commitments* (Muskoka, 2010), available from http://www.donorplatform.org/activities/food-security/news/198-g-20-renews-commitment-to-agricultural-development.html.

13. Rural women are crucial in the translation of agricultural production into food and nutritional security, since they are often responsible for cultivating food crops, managing small animals, growing vegetables in home gardens for food or income and food preparation. They have developed solutions to many challenges in sustainable land and water management, climate change mitigation and adaptation and preservation of indigenous and local knowledge.

14. In sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, in addition to being the main producers of household food, women contribute substantially to non-agricultural production in rural areas, especially in the informal sector and in small and medium-size enterprises.

15. Despite the contribution of rural women to rural development in both developing and developed countries, their rights and priorities remain insufficiently addressed in legal frameworks, national and local development policies and investment strategies at all levels. They continue to face serious challenges in carrying out their multiple productive and reproductive roles within their families and communities, in part due to lack of rural infrastructure and essential goods and services.

16. It would, however, be a mistake to portray rural women as weak and vulnerable. Rather, they should be regarded as active economic agents with untapped potential to make a significant contribution to mitigating the effects of climate change, food insecurity and rural poverty, as well as to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

17. The following sections examine the situation of women in rural areas and illustrate some of the initiatives implemented since December 2009 to enhance their economic empowerment, specifically highlighting effective institutions and local service delivery; employment and decent work; unpaid care work; land ownership; local and indigenous knowledge; contributions to climate change adaptation; and productive technology.

## A. Effective institutions for policy and planning and local service delivery

18. The empowerment of women in rural areas requires gender-responsive national and local development strategies and sector-specific plans, programmes and budgets to address the specific obstacles they face in accessing employment and decent work, education and training opportunities, health care and transportation, as well as constraints due to their disproportionate family responsibilities. Gender-sensitive governance in the institutions responsible for rural development, agricultural and other related sectors (such as water and energy management) can enable rural women to hold public officials accountable in areas such as public service delivery. To enhance a systemic approach to rural development, the national strategic plan for Italy includes a mechanism to enable women farm managers to engage in the agricultural value chain from production to processing and marketing. FAO has recently partnered with Governments, such as that in Ghana, to integrate gender equality into national policies on food and agriculture.

19. Gender-responsive national and local budget initiatives are powerful tools for ensuring that national rural development planning and resource allocation target

rural women. An analysis of the allocation of budgetary resources to agricultural activities in Morocco showed that only 9 per cent of the beneficiaries were women, even though women represented 39 per cent of those engaged in rural activity. Responding to these findings, Morocco increased its budget support for programmes benefiting rural women by over 50 per cent in 2007 compared to 2005.[12]

20. The limited basic infrastructure and insufficient local service provision in rural areas restrict the full participation of women in the labour market and in community activities. They also exacerbate their already unequal share of unpaid care work, since they are obliged to spend long hours fetching water and fuel and, without access to technology, spend hours in food-processing and preparation. Public investment in sustainable infrastructure (e.g. public transportation, sanitation and renewable energy) and fuel-efficient and labour-saving technologies (e.g. clean and fuel-efficient cooking stoves, efficient pumping and purification of drinking water) can substantially reduce the time women and girls spend on these time-consuming chores and enhance their options for gainful work and mobility. Such investments can also contribute to reduced greenhouse gas emissions and create employment opportunities in rural areas (see sections C on unpaid care work and E on productive technologies below).

21. Provision of a social protection floor to provide employment guarantees, income support benefits, basic income security guarantees for the elderly and persons with disabilities and child care and benefits can help combat rising inequality and persistent poverty in rural areas. Italy's national strategic plan and regional rural development programmes include strengthened childcare and preschool services in rural areas. Such measures can help overcome insecurity and vulnerability in the lives of rural women and enable them to participate more fully in economic life, as workers, employers, consumers and citizens. They can also help address the multiple inequalities faced by indigenous women or women from ethnic minorities living in rural areas. Efforts are also needed to increase access to health facilities, education, training and other support services (such as shelters for survivors of violence and abuse) for rural women.

22. Integrated services enable rural women to save time and transport costs when they need assistance. In the Republic of Moldova, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) supports "one-stop shops" (joint information and services bureaux) that provide information on employment, social protection, business development, land tenure and finance. The Swedish-funded programme provided almost 500 consultations to rural people in the first half of 2011, of whom 70 per cent were women. The programme is facilitating women's access to e-transformation services, through assisting district service providers to provide mobile phone services to remote villages.

23. Expanding access to financial services for rural women is crucial to their economic empowerment. Kenya initiated the Women Enterprise Fund to provide subsidized credit, as well as training and marketing services, for businesses run by women. Togo trained women in resource management to ensure better credit repayment and established compulsory savings schemes. Mexico, through its rural supply programme, supplies subsidized basic consumer products to community

[12] United Nations Development Fund for Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009: Who Answers to Women? Gender and Accountability* (New York, 2009).

shops in rural locations to offer savings to rural consumers and improve food and nutrition levels for the rural population. In Uzbekistan, UN-Women supports the Women's Committee and the centres for social and legal support, to help rural women access economic and financial resources, including microcredit.

24. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have promoted enhanced access to maternal and reproductive health services for rural women. With the world's highest burden of disease, Africa has only 6 per cent of the world's maternal health professionals, with an extremely low number of health professionals in rural areas.[13] To address these challenges, UNFPA works with the International Confederation of Midwives and the ministers of health and education in 15 countries in Africa, the Arab States and Latin America to increase the capacity and the number of midwives; supports midwifery education programmes in Sierra Leone and South Sudan; supports access to reproductive health services in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkmenistan; and uses mobile health units to reach women living in remote areas of Afghanistan, Bolivia (the Plurinational State of), Haiti, Nepal, Pakistan, Swaziland, Turkey and Yemen. In the Niger, solar radios and story kits have been used to improve access for rural women and girls to information on maternal health, schooling for girls, prevention of HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies.

25. To address the challenges of nutritional deficiencies in poor rural areas, FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) have supported local projects in numerous countries to establish and maintain home gardens producing species such as quinoa, millet, amaranth, leafy vegetables and some groundnuts, which have also resulted in income-generating activities for women.

26. Rural women also require knowledge and support to gain access to their rights. Governments and the United Nations system have made efforts to improve local services for women in rural areas. For example, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has helped establish eight legal help centres in Afghanistan to provide legal protection and support to victims of domestic violence and has assisted Lebanon in providing more equitable social services. The General Women's Union of the United Arab Emirates has organized workshops to increase rural women's awareness of their labour rights, as well as rights to pension and divorce.

27. Efforts have been made to strengthen women's participation and leadership in rural institutions, such as agricultural producer and rural worker associations, cooperatives, rural credit unions, water users' groups and self-help groups. For example, in its work with rural producer organizations, FAO emphasizes gender-responsive and participatory approaches to promote the enhanced efficiency of such organizations in servicing the needs of all female and male farmers and communities. Producer organizations offer members a range of services and thus provide rural women with a collective way to access productive resources, information and markets.

28. The participation of rural women in self-help groups can contribute to their enhanced access to productive inputs and support services, such as land, extension services, fertilizers and seeds, and strengthen their capacity to manage land and

[13] UNFPA and other agencies, *The State of the World's Midwifery Report 2011: Delivering Health, Saving Lives* (Geneva, 2011), available from www.who.int/pmnch/media/membernews/2011/20110620sowmr/en/index.html.

other resources. UN-Women has helped to build a partnership between women's self-help groups and the Ministry of Agriculture in Kyrgyzstan. This project provided rural women with vegetable seeds under a World Bank food security project and led to the formation of 51 rural women's groups in 17 villages. Over 22,000 people (half of them women) have benefited from grants from UN-Women, with matching contributions from the community and local government. The projects resulted in expansion in small-scale irrigation and infrastructure projects; job creation; improved vegetable production; and better school conditions. The self-help groups established community development funds to be used to purchase inputs for the following years.

29. Farmers' groups can be an effective way of disseminating technologies and enabling cooperative action. IFAD, in collaboration with the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry, worked with farmers' groups in Cameroon, Gabon, Guinea and Nigeria to increase incomes from the use of new techniques for indigenous tree cultivation. Through their participation in such groups, women farmers benefited from the new technologies and gained confidence and self-esteem.

## B. Employment and decent work

30. Paid employment is a primary force for reducing poverty and food insecurity and for empowering rural women economically. However, decent and productive employment in rural areas remains a great challenge. Decent work deficits faced by rural workers, in particular women and youth, include low pay, poor quality jobs, widespread underemployment, absence of labour rights, inadequate social protection and the lack of a representative voice. The implementation of labour laws, regulations and policies is usually limited in rural areas.[14] Rural women tend to be employed in the more precarious forms of informal employment, as unpaid family workers on family farms or as casual day labourers on farms owned by others.[15]

31. Realizing the potential of rural women requires tackling all of the decent work deficits mentioned above. Initiatives to enhance rural women's employment opportunities in the agricultural sector are being carried out by Member States and United Nations partner agencies in many countries. In Norway, for example, the Government has created new jobs for women in new agricultural industries, particularly those that provide food and services to the health, education and social care sectors. The Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies of Italy, in paying greater attention to women in agriculture, promotes the concept of multifunctional agriculture through the creation and promotion of new professional profiles and employment opportunities in rural areas. FAO has provided women with skills training in agricultural extension work in Mozambique, Swaziland, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia; Canada has supported skills training for women as animal health extension workers in China, post-harvest

[14] ILO, *Promotion of Rural Employment for Poverty Reduction*, report IV for the 97th session of the International Labour Conference. Available from www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_091721.pdf. See also http://www.fao-ilo.org/fao-ilo-gender/en/ for more information on gender-equitable rural employment.

[15] See IFAD "Gender-equitable rural work to reduce poverty and boost economic growth", Gender and Rural Employment Policy Brief No. 1 (Rome, 2010); and ILO, *Promotion of Rural Employment for Poverty Reduction* (Geneva, 2008).

processing in Ghana and vegetable production for returning women refugees in the Sudan. In Togo, multifunctional platforms are being installed to create employment and income-generating opportunities for women and help move their agricultural products up the value chain by increasing their market value.

32. In building Malian women's capacity to produce shea butter, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), with support from the Canadian International Development Agency and the National Karité Programme, helped transfer processing equipment to women's groups in three centres, enabling them to meet international standards. As a result, a joint venture company has been set up between the women's groups and a French cosmetics company for the supply of 40 tons of shea-based soap bars in 2011. Similarly, FAO provided women producers with information on shea processing and product certification techniques in Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger and Senegal. Japan provides rural women entrepreneurs engaged in local food-processing with training to develop new products and improve the management of farmers' markets.

33. While providing a livelihood for some 86 per cent of rural women and men and generating jobs for some 1.3 billion smallholder farmers and landless workers,[16] agriculture alone cannot reduce rural poverty. Rural off-farm employment opportunities are critical for rural development, growth and poverty reduction. It allows households to diversify their income sources and insure themselves against economic and environmental shocks affecting agriculture. Women can play an important role in the wholesale and retail trade, rural industry, agribusiness, trading enterprises, transport, storage and infrastructure development, as well as in the local service sector (e.g. education, health, finance and insurance, tourism and local shops and restaurants).

34. Public works programmes in some countries have provided models of decent working conditions by offering a fixed work schedule, decent wages, childcare and social protection. For example, India has implemented the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme since 2006, guaranteeing 100 days of work to rural households for unskilled manual workers. The 33 per cent reservation for women workers and the provision of childcare at the sites has contributed greatly to the high level of participation of women. During 2010 and 2011, almost 50 million households were employed under this programme and the share of women averaged 47 per cent.[17]

35. Many initiatives by Governments and the United Nations system focus on improving the productive capacity of rural women and on diversifying their sources of income in the non-agricultural sector by providing business training and skills in enterprise development. For example, Mozambique, supported by UNIDO and the Government of Norway, has introduced an entrepreneurship programme into the curriculum of its formal secondary and tertiary education system, encouraging girls

[16] World Bank, *World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development* (Washington, D.C., 2007), overview.

[17] UNDP policy brief, "Employment guarantee policies", Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction series, No. 2, April 2010, available from http://www.beta.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/womens-empowerment/policy-brief-gender-equality-and-employment-guarantee-policies-/Policy%20Brief%20Employment%20FINAL.pdf. See also the Ministry of Rural Development, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 website, http://nrega.nic.in/.

to work in non-traditional enterprises that challenge gender stereotypes and sensitizing their families to the benefits of girls starting small businesses. The programme is now being replicated and scaled up in Angola, Cameroon, Cape Verde and Namibia.

36. A programme implemented by UNDP in Turkmenistan has provided training in business development and operation (e.g. finance, marketing and sales) to more than 60 rural women, who in turn have trained other women in these skills. Tracking the impact of business training on 50 out of 250 businesswomen in Kenya, under the Empretec programme,[18] UNDP found that 30 per cent of the women had recorded an expansion in their enterprises through diversification and adding value. UNIDO has developed a rural and women entrepreneurship development service that encourages collective self-help efforts, access to information and communication technologies and renewable energy solutions. Status of Women Canada supports women's financial literacy and employability skills training. Canada's Rural Partnership Community Development Program supports knowledge-building among young rural women, women's leadership initiatives, and youth entrepreneurship activities for female entrepreneurs, using the collective capacity of rural communities in developing skills and identifying opportunities. Greece encourages rural women's entrepreneurship by supporting the modernization of smallholdings in rural areas and developing small enterprises and tourist opportunities. A regional project in Denmark focuses on strengthening the managerial and business competencies of businesses owned by women.

## C. Unpaid care work

37. Rural women invest considerable amounts of time in unpaid work related to child and elder care, food production and food-processing, water and energy collection and other household chores. In so doing they support the private commodity and public service economies by supplying productive human capital as well as social capital. At the same time, the heavy burden this puts on women diverts their time away from farming tasks and non-farm enterprise activities, impacting their productivity and incomes, which in turn affects rural consumption, investment and savings. Importantly, if women's unpaid household and care work ceased, the private commodity and public service economies would be seriously disrupted.[19]

38. Since time poverty, resulting from unpaid household and care work, is one of the most critical factors hindering women's access to paid work in rural areas,[20] investment in time- and labour-saving technologies and the expansion of access to key infrastructure (e.g. rural water and irrigation systems, domestic energy and rural transportation) is critical to women's economic empowerment and could have substantial multiplier effects on poverty reduction and economic growth. Providing income and caregiving support to rural households also reduces the strain of rural-urban migration in many countries.

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[18] Empretec is an integrated capacity-building programme of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. See http://www.unctadxi.org/templates/Page____7362.aspx.

[19] See UNDP policy brief, "Unpaid care work" (see ch. II, footnote 10).

[20] FAO, IFAD, ILO, *Gender Dimensions of Agricultural and Rural Employment: Differentiated Pathways Out of Poverty* (Rome, 2010), available from www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1638e/i1638e.pdf.

39. A wide range of innovative technologies and techniques, including improved cooking stoves, rainwater harvesting schemes and intermediate transport devices, grinding mills and other food-processing equipment, have proven to help reduce women's time poverty.[21] The introduction of the first multifunctional platform in Burkina Faso in 2002 represented a giant step towards breaking the vicious cycle of women's time and energy poverty. A 2009 report highlights the time saving of three hours for grinding millet and similar savings for fetching water with the introduction of these platforms.[22]

40. In order to reduce women's unpaid care responsibilities, Italy has prioritized the provision of family care services in all rural development policies, particularly in rural areas in the south, which have high unemployment rates and infrastructure deficits. In addressing a better balance in childcare responsibilities, Norway promotes equal parenthood and has introduced measures to strengthen the role of all fathers in childcare, including in rural areas. Similarly, the family code of El Salvador has made work in the home and the care of children a joint responsibility of both partners.

41. Time-use studies provide a rich source of data on the differentiated roles of rural women and men and provide practical guidance for policymakers and practitioners involved in technology investment, extension services, post-harvest activities and marketing interventions. FAO has created a range of gender analysis tools that assist in generating data and knowledge on the roles and unpaid work contributions of rural women, such as the Agri-Gender Statistics Toolkit,[23] which provides a compilation of gender-sensitive indicators and questionnaire components on the responsibilities of women and men farmers. In its "family management agreement", Japan calls upon each family to stipulate details on decision-making in agricultural management, work hours and wages.

## D. Land ownership and inheritance

42. While it is difficult to determine women's average share of agricultural land ownership in developing countries, owing to the lack of data in many countries, it falls far short of their participation in the agricultural labour force in developing countries, which is 43 per cent. Stark gender disparities in land holdings are apparent in all regions. Based on various data sources, including household surveys and agricultural censuses, FAO has estimated that in countries with available data, women represent fewer than 5 per cent of all agricultural landholders in North Africa and West Asia, and on average 15 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa. This disparity has resulted not only in lower agricultural productivity of women compared to men, but also in greater poverty of female-headed households.[7]

43. Farmers almost everywhere depend on land ownership for accessing irrigation, extension services, credit, subsidies and decision-making power. The fact that rural

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[21] Marilyn Carr with Maria Hartl, *Lightening the Load: Labour-saving Technologies and Practices for Rural Women*, IFAD and Practical Action Publishing (Rugby, United Kingdom, 2010), available from www.ifad.org/gender/pub/load.pdf.

[22] UNDP, "The multi-functional platform: bringing energy, ushering in change for the better to Burkina Faso's rural communities", January 2009, available from www.pnud.bf/DOCS/Platform-ENG.pdf.

[23] See www.fao.org/gender/agrigender/en/.

women are less likely than men to own land not only makes their farm work less productive but also frequently excludes them from farmers' organizations, workers' unions and community networks and forums that promote enhanced productivity and growth.

44. Countries in all regions have instituted land reform policies designed to break up large holdings and grant individual or joint land titles. In both formal and customary property regimes, men are generally the main beneficiaries of land titles (both in terms of quantity and quality of land). Opposition from land reform authorities, village authorities and male relatives can frustrate efforts to extend legal land rights to both single and married women.

45. In countries where both women and men have formal legal rights to land and property, limited implementation of such laws or customary practice may prevent women from realizing these rights. This was, for example, the case in a number of land titling programmes in Latin America in the 1990s, despite statutory gender equality. In cases where women have enjoyed customary, communal or collective land rights, land reforms have often eroded women's rights as titles have generally been given to male heads of household. This was the case in Central Asia during the post-Soviet reforms.[24] It is therefore essential to ensure women's equal rights in all laws related to land and property, including family and inheritance laws, and to monitor their effective implementation.

46. Some Member States have enacted legislation and implemented initiatives to provide women with equitable access to land and other property. Women have equal rights to own property in 115 countries and have equal inheritance rights in 93 countries.[25] In El Salvador, for example, women are guaranteed equal access to joint title deeds for agricultural and fishery production units. Some laws go beyond this: a 2009 royal decree in Spain encourages shared ownership of agrarian holdings and extends social security benefits to women co-owners.

47. Since indigenous women have particular constraints in accessing land, due to lack of citizenship rights in many countries, specific efforts are required to secure their rights. For example, the World Bank has promoted the participation of indigenous women in communal land management organizations in Guatemala and in capacity-building workshops on land administration and property rights in Honduras. In Mexico, rural and indigenous women leaders were brought together in an "encounter" to discuss their concerns related to land tenure and ownership and access to institutions. In New Zealand, rural and indigenous (Maori) women were granted full and equal rights to own and lease land and other property, including through the right to inheritance.

48. Married women often lack awareness of their land entitlements and may not realize that they do not have rights over the family land until the marriage is dissolved or the husband dies. This is often the situation in countries hard hit by HIV/AIDS. Awareness-raising and capacity-building of rural women to learn about and claim their rights over land and other property is a critical step towards ensuring women's rights. UN-Women, with the help of local land specialists, local authorities

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[24] United Nations Research Institute for Social Development "Land tenure reform and gender equality", Research and Policy Brief No. 4 (Geneva, 2006) available from http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Policy-Briefs/Detail/?lng=en&id=28606.

[25] UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2011-2012: In Pursuit of Justice* (New York, 2011).

and representatives of local justice systems, has assisted more than 1,800 rural women and their families in Kyrgyzstan in better understanding the land registration process, providing titles and certifying land share documents. In Tajikistan, UN-Women partnered with FAO in supporting 16 legal assistance centres to monitor the distribution of agricultural land to secure land tenure for rural women. El Salvador has set up consultative councils and social oversight bodies to support women's claims to land rights and demand for government accountability.

49. It is equally important to build the capacity of the legal system to uphold women's right to own land and other property. To this end, in Mozambique FAO trained over 90 women and men as paralegals on land law and women's access to land. A majority of the trainees, a quarter of whom were women, represented non-governmental organizations. An evaluation found that the paralegals were able to successfully support communities in a number of conflicts.

50. To enable people to use dialogue and negotiation to reach consensus on controversial issues, FAO developed preliminary guidelines for improving gender equality in territorial issues and undertook extensive consultations in 2009 and 2010 with the United Nations system, Governments, civil society and the private sector. The draft voluntary guidelines on responsible governance of tenure of land and other natural resources, which FAO prepared as a result of this process, have been widely circulated since early 2011. Implementation of the guidelines is planned for 2012 and beyond.

51. Intra-household data and information disaggregated by sex is critical for promoting a better and full understanding of women's rights to land and other property, informed policy-making and land reforms and divorce and inheritance laws.[26] FAO has developed the Gender and Land Rights Database[27] to make available information on national legal frameworks, policies enforcing or preventing women's land rights, international treaties and conventions, customary laws and other relevant subjects for 78 countries.

## E. Productive technologies

52. Science, technology and innovation offer solutions to many of the challenges faced by rural women: they can contribute to food security by boosting crop yields; reduce women's unpaid care work by introducing labour-saving technologies (see section C above); and increase participation of women in the rural labour market through better communications.

53. However, mechanization and advanced technologies can sometimes have an adverse impact on women's employment opportunities. For example, FAO and IFAD, reviewing programme interventions from 2000 to 2010, noted that the adoption of high-yielding varieties of rice and wheat after the Green Revolution in India and of drum seeders in rice cultivation in South and South-East Asia saved

[26] Cheryl Doss, Caren Grown and Carmen Diana Deere, "Collecting individual level asset data for gender analysis of poverty and rural employment", paper presented at the FAO-IFAD-ILO workshop on gaps, trends and current research in gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment, Rome, April 2009.

[27] Available from www.fao.org/gender/landrights.

time and labour for wealthier farmers, but meant that the poorest and landless women agricultural labourers no longer had access to traditional jobs.

54. Numerous initiatives have been carried out to promote women's access to agriculture and food-processing technologies with a view to enhancing the empowerment, productivity and integration into the global value chain of women farmers. For example, improved technology and production methods provided to women entrepreneurs in Morocco helped boost their production of olive oil. This initiative of UNIDO and the Spanish Cooperation Agency also enabled women producers to control the quality and level of acidity, produce safe and good-quality oil, improve their marketing, packaging design and registration of trademarks, diversify into higher value-added products and obtain organic certification. As a result, women's overall earnings have more than doubled. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, IFAD, in collaboration with the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, provided women with basic low-cost technologies and training to improve their production of milk products from goats.

55. To support small producers with improved access to applied technologies and practices on a variety of rural activities, FAO has developed an interactive platform: "Technologies and practices for small agricultural producers",[28] which includes a database and online forums. The platform goes beyond standardized descriptions of proven technologies and has evolved into a tool to strengthen institutions in sharing and testing technologies for small-scale farmers.

56. Water technologies provide an important means for improving the situation of rural women and for reducing poverty. The multiple-use water system approach is promising, as it addresses broad water needs better than sectoral water development programmes and ensures that all users have fair access to local water resources. Communities participate in planning and selecting technologies that meet their needs, in consultation with local authorities. IFAD has worked to ensure that women are members of local water committees, so that their water needs for domestic and farming purposes are given equal importance. In Nepal, 82 systems have been established, benefiting about 12,000 small farmers. Women have gained from reduced time spent gathering water; girls have been enrolled in school; women's incomes have increased from water fees and high-value crops; and women's role in decision-making within the household has also increased. As part of its water and sanitation joint programme in Mexico, UNDP is supporting the Government in involving women in local water management committees and in using disinfection technologies that improve drinking water quality. The World Bank has promoted women's participation in water management in the Dominican Republic and in Peru. The Bank funded capacity-building for women in financial, technical and management areas, with a view to improving their contributions to water user organizations and management of irrigation systems.

57. Rural women's access to energy technologies for productive use is critical for their economic empowerment. It reduces the time women spend on manual work and allows them to move up the value chain, particularly if there is a steady supply of affordable energy, required for knitting, brewing, food-processing, spinning and textile production. UNIDO supports energy provision for the development of rural enterprises and cottage industries that provide an important source of income for

[28] See http://teca.fao.org/home.

rural women. In Kenya, for example, UNIDO developed a zero-emission renewable energy community power centre, using microhydropower to generate electricity to replace the use of kerosene lamps. It provides energy to small-scale women entrepreneurs engaged in micro-industries such as soap processing and fruit juice production. It is estimated that 10 such centres would offset approximately 5,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions per year. In Cameroon, UNDP introduced fuel-efficient cooking techniques to indigenous women in the drought-ridden far north. In India, women were trained in solar engineering and have in turn trained other women in the maintenance of solar panels. In 2008, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in collaboration with the International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy, organized a regional policy meeting on networking for gender and poverty-sensitive energy policies, which led to a policy innovation forum that focuses on energy innovations for women in poor rural households.

58. Information and communications technology, particularly mobile telephony, offers opportunities for women to monitor market prices for agricultural products, obtain better revenue and eliminate intermediaries. FAO has a number of projects aimed at facilitating women's access to technology, such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Niger, where solar energy mobile phones and wind-up radios are used as key media for "listeners clubs" to increase knowledge-sharing, improve flows of information and empower rural populations, particularly women. In India and Pakistan, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in collaboration with private sector providers, has improved the literacy of 1,500 rural women by using mobile phones and text messaging.

## F. Protecting knowledge, innovations and practices in indigenous and local communities

59. Indigenous and local communities are the custodians of many different skills, practices and knowledge systems, which have enabled them to adapt to difficult conditions. Recently, however, indigenous livelihoods have deteriorated as the scale and intensity of environmental and cultural loss has increased, upsetting the harmony between indigenous peoples and their surrounding environment.

60. There are an increasing number of initiatives undertaken by Governments and the United Nations system to harness the potential of indigenous knowledge among local people. For example, UNESCO has paid particular attention to the key role of women as holders of local and indigenous knowledge in traditional medicine,[29] and as agents of change on three Indian Ocean islands, involving different traditions from Africa, Asia and Europe. Similarly, the Maori health strategy of New Zealand acknowledges that Maori women community health and voluntary workers and their indigenous and traditional healing models have a pivotal role in improving the health of Maori families.

61. UN-Women has worked alongside indigenous women's groups — members of Waorani and Quechua communities — to ensure their involvement in the sustainable

[29] Laurence Pourchez, *Women's Knowledge: Traditional Medicine and Nature — the Islands of Reunion, Mauritius and Rodrigues* (UNESCO, Paris, 2011, in French only).

conservation and management of the natural and cultural heritage of the Yasuní Biosphere Reserve in Ecuador, and provided training to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into related policies and programmes.

62. In an effort to foster security of livelihoods of indigenous peoples in the Altiplano (Plurinational State of Bolivia), six United Nations agencies (FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNIDO and the World Food Programme), through a joint Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund programme, support indigenous women producers by linking their agricultural products to different markets and value chains. Also through the Fund, FAO, UNDP and UNIDO are implementing a joint programme to promote asset-building, productivity, income and citizenship for indigenous women in extreme poverty in the Plurinational State of Bolivia. Women entrepreneurs are provided with financial and business development services, as well as civil and political rights training.

63. UNFPA collaborates with indigenous organizations in the Plurinational State of Bolivia for the inclusion of ethnic definition data (self-identification) and gender issues in the 2011 census as a way to incorporate the intercultural perspective. In Belize, UNFPA has strengthened the capacity of providers of health services in indigenous communities regarding contraceptive technology.

## G. The contribution of rural women to climate change adaptation and mitigation

64. Women make up a large number of the poor in communities that are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood and are disproportionately vulnerable to and affected by climate change, exacerbated by their limited access to resources and decision-making processes. Women in rural areas have the major responsibility for household water supply and energy for cooking and heating, as well as for food security, and are negatively affected by drought, uncertain rainfall and deforestation.[30] Because of their unequal access to resources and limited mobility, women in many contexts are disproportionately affected by natural disasters, such as floods, fires and mudslides. FAO is currently undertaking research to better understand the gender-differentiated impact of climate change and the different coping strategies adopted by women and men, with a view to informing climate change policy, adaptation practices and more sustainable livelihood coping strategies.

65. However, women are not only victims of climate change. They also have a strong body of knowledge and expertise that can be used in climate change mitigation, disaster reduction and adaptation strategies. Women's responsibilities in households and communities as stewards of natural resources have positioned them well for livelihood strategies adapted to changing environmental realities. For example, in Senegal, women's organizations helped control soil erosion by building crescent-shaped canals to retain water, recover croplands and improve agricultural output. Women in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua planted

[30] See Women's Environment and Development Organization, "Changing the climate: why women's perspectives matter", information sheet, 2007, available from http://www.undp.org.cu/crmi/docs/wedo-ccwomen-in-2007-en.pdf.

400,000 Maya nut trees to increase food sources while preserving and increasing carbon sinks.[31]

66. Women tend to be underrepresented in national- and local-level decision-making on sustainable development, including on climate change, which impedes their ability to contribute their unique and valuable perspectives and expertise on climate change. To strengthen women's economic decision-making in households affected by illicit drug cultivation, the Forest Warden Families Programme in Colombia, supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, provides 71 per cent of economic incentives directly to women. In supporting conservation agriculture in Zambia, Norway has increased the number of female farmers who are trained, thereby supporting them to take decisions on adapting to climate change to improve crop yields and reduce their workload.

67. Financing mechanisms must be flexible enough to reflect women's priorities and needs. The active participation of women in the development of funding criteria and allocation of resources for climate change initiatives is critical, particularly at the local level. Gender analysis of all budget lines and financial instruments for climate change is needed to ensure gender-sensitive investments in programmes for adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and capacity-building.

68. Technological developments related to climate change should take into account women's specific priorities and needs and make full use of their knowledge and expertise, including traditional practices. Women's involvement in the development of new technologies can ensure that they are user-friendly, effective and sustainable. For example, UNDP implemented an energy access programme in nine regions of Burkina Faso, benefiting more than 27,000 women with improved energy technology, business and incomes. In eight communities in Senegal, UNDP, in collaboration with the Ndiop Women's Association, rolled out a solar cooker, produced with locally available materials, that has reduced the time women spend gathering firewood and also the health risks from smoke exposure. Similar initiatives were carried out in Nepal, where microhydropower, biogas and improved cooking stoves have contributed to women's empowerment.

## IV. Conclusions and recommendations

**69. Rural women continue to be economically and socially disadvantaged because of their limited access to economic resources and opportunities, their exclusion from planning and decision-making and their disproportionate burden of unpaid care work. While there is growing recognition that rural women, including indigenous women, are critical agents in poverty reduction, food security, environmental sustainability and other aspects relating to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, insufficient attention has been paid to the factors that deepen inequalities between rural women and men, and inadequate action has been taken to eliminate discrimination and overcome the structural disadvantages faced by women.**

**70. Member States and United Nations entities have taken measures to improve the situation of rural women and girls in relation to expanding their access to local services, employment and entrepreneurship, land rights and**

[31] UNDP, *Resource Guide on Gender and Climate Change* (New York, 2009).

**technologies. They have also taken steps to recognize, reduce and redistribute women's burden of unpaid care work, protect indigenous and local knowledge and promote women's contribution to climate change adaptation and mitigation. These initiatives currently benefit only a small number of communities, however, and there is a lack of evidence about the impact of those efforts and the results achieved in regard to the empowerment of, and poverty reduction among, rural women.**

71. **The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in rural areas would require a more coherent, systematic and strategic integration of the economic empowerment of women and girls in rural areas into national development strategies and plans, including in the areas of rural development, infrastructure and local governance.**

72. **The Commission on the Status of Women will consider the empowerment of rural women as its priority theme in 2012. This provides an opportunity for the Commission to monitor, review and appraise progress achieved and problems encountered in the implementation of previous commitments and to make action-oriented recommendations to accelerate their implementation. The General Assembly may wish to invite all stakeholders to undertake preparations for the session, including through consultations with civil society, and encourage participation at the session from all relevant sectoral ministries and government agencies to facilitate action-oriented discussions and outcomes.**

73. **The General Assembly may wish to call on Governments, United Nations entities and all other relevant stakeholders:**

(a) **To strengthen the implementation of all existing commitments on rural development and rural women's empowerment and rights, in particular the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and their application to women in rural areas;**

(b) **To undertake participatory needs and impact assessments for the economic empowerment of rural women and, based on such assessments, adopt gender-responsive rural development strategies and budget frameworks and ensure that the needs and priorities of rural women and girls are systematically addressed, that they can effectively contribute to poverty and hunger eradication and that appropriate budgets are allocated in the implementation of such strategies and in the delivery of local services;**

(c) **To put in place temporary special measures to realize the full and equal participation in decision-making bodies at the national and local levels of rural and indigenous women, including on agricultural policy boards and rural development commissions, water and land committees and associations of employers, farmers, producers and small businesses;**

(d) **To target rural women in national and local employment creation initiatives and build their productive capacity to enable them to participate in the global value chain and strengthen their contribution to national and local development;**

(e) **To develop monitoring and evaluation strategies and frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment in rural areas to ensure tracking of progress, impact and result of actions taken;**

**(f) To strengthen the capacity of national statistical offices to collect, analyse and disseminate comparable sex-disaggregated data, including on time use, and gender statistics in rural areas to serve as a basis for gender-responsive policy design and strategy development in rural areas;**

**(g) To compile and share examples of good practices and lessons learned in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in rural areas, with a view to replicating and scaling up successes;**

**(h) To integrate the perspectives of rural and indigenous women into the preparations for and outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Brazil in 2012, with a view to accelerating progress on gender equality and women's empowerment in rural areas.**